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ABSTRACT

This book analyzes the response of employees at a southern hospital to a functional context literacy program. It uses ethnographic techniques, storytelling, and observations of workplace relations to illustrate how classism, racism, and sexism continue to be part of the workplace environment and how these factors contribute to employees' resistance to functional context programs. Chapter 1 considers the literacy "crisis" and describes the King Memorial Work Skills Development Program. Chapter 2 contains interpretations of events by management, a consultant, a project director, an instructor, and employees. Chapter 3 considers how and why employees and others interpret the institution as reproducing social relations in the antebellum past, thus inviting a continuation of traditional patterns of resistance. To show the extent to which a functional context approach becomes a method to change knowledge construction and display, chapter 4 examines the beliefs about knowledge and literacy that inform this position. Employee resistance to this reformulation is explored. Chapter 5 considers the political and social implications of work-related text for employees as a way to understand their resistance to using it in the ways mainstream culture expects. Chapter 6 describes what employees want from a literacy program at work and how the instructor tries to give them at least part of what they want. An epilogue reports little change in employees' lives but several dramatic changes in the hospital. Ninety-seven references and an index are appended. (YLB)

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